

Phuket Gazette

September 26 - October 2, 2015

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‘THE EMOTIONAL SCARRING LASTS A LIFETIME’

Paddling against child abuse



Mr Rider is about to embark on a four-day expedition around Phuket. Photo: Chris Cella

■ Aussie haunted by violent child abuse fights back to inspire world

By Isaac Simonelli
and Chutharat Plerin

A GREAT white shark knocked Damien Rider from his paddle board during one of eleven shark encounters he faced as he

paddled 800 kilometers from Rainbow Bay, Gold Coast to Bondi Beach, Sydney in January 2015.

However, the demon that he was battling wasn't below the ocean's surface, but in the vivid world of abuse that he endured as a child.

Now, 33 years after he was first scarred by the violence of his mother's boyfriend, he is doing everything in his power to raise awareness of child abuse throughout the world.

Mr Rider's latest effort lands him in Phuket, where he is training at Phuket Cleanse before embarking on a circumnavigation of the island – a four-day

journey by standup paddle board – for his self-funded organization: Paddle Against Child Abuse (PACA).

While training, Mr Rider is also sharing his story with many students on the island, such as those at Phuket International Academy.

“From the age of six my mom's boyfriend came to live with us. I never grew up with a father, so he was the only man who came into the house,” Mr Rider said.

“My introduction to him was him beating police on the front lawn and then coming in and bashing my mom and then...

Continued on Pages 4-5

Locals tackle deadly road conditions with asphalt

FOUR local men used money from their own pockets to help fix dangerous sections of the bypass road near the Samkong underpass construction site.

Full story Page 3

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Tourists saved from sinking speedboat

MORE than a dozen Chinese tourists and a speedboat crew were safely rescued after their boat sank near Koh Kai last weekend.

The 16 tourists were on their way to Phi Phi from Phuket when their speedboat, *Papangkorn*, struck an unknown object causing the boat to take on water, Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana said.

A speedboat that had been following the *Papangkorn* was called upon to help rescue the tourists, tour guide, boat captain and crew.

The captain of *Papangkorn* confirmed that all tourists had been wearing their life jackets.

— Chutharat Plerin

Illegal fishing vessel targeted internationally

THE ongoing search for the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing vessel that slipped through the fingers of Phuket officials earlier this month is now the subject of an international pursuit, confirmed Sayan Prasongsamrej, commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command.

“As soon as we received the report that the vessel had gone missing, we began an aerial search in the south, where we believe the vessel may have gone,” said Vice Admiral Sayan.

“The vessel was under investigation regarding its registration, so the crew were not in police custody. They were just mooring like any other ordinary cargo ship.”

Despite their best efforts, the Navy was unable to track down

Local tour guides demand action



VIDEO REPORT: About 100 local tour guides marched on Phuket Provincial Hall to demand that Governor Nisit Jansomwong follow through on ridding the island of illegal guides. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Nattha Thepbamrung

the ship, *Taishan*, which was seized in March after having already fled from the navies of New Zealand and Australia, as well as global conservation organization Sea Shepherd.

— Chutharat Plerin

Ammonia leak worries locals

A WATER plant in Rawai was leaking ammonia into a local canal, confirmed officials on September 20.

In their complaint to Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos, locals who claimed to be suffering from itchy eyes and sore noses al-

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

leged that a strong ammonia smell was coming from The Crystal Drinking Water plant.

Mr Aroon ordered the plant owner to shut down the ammonia-leaking ice machine, noting that a similar incident had occurred at the plant four or five years ago.

“I have filed a case with the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO) so that their experts can check the site and ensure that the situation is safe for the public’s health,” Mr Aroon said.

— Kritsada Meunhawong

Air pollution warning lifted

OFFICIALS lifted an air quality health warning for the island on September 20, after the haze caused by Indonesian wildfires began to decrease.

“Air pollution levels dropped to an average of 94 micrograms per cubic meter for the last 24-hour period,” Pornsri Suthanarak, director of

the Regional Environmental Office, said on September 21.

That weekend, air pollution on the island maintained levels above the public safety standard of 120 micrograms per cubic meter.

— Chutharat Plerin

Missing teen’s body recovered

LIFEGUARDS have recovered the body of a teen who went missing off Kata Beach on September 17.

Boonchiaw Thongdonmuang, 18, was fishing with friends on a rock outcrop known as ‘Laem Fa’ when he was struck by a large wave and taken out to sea on September 16.

— Chutharat Plerin

Stinky shroom to bring good luck, says local

LOCALS believe that the rare ‘stinky squid’ mushroom they discovered in a jasmine pot after making merit in Chalong on September 20 will bring them good luck.

“It looked so weird to me: it was like a squid and smelt

very, very bad,” said Wichut Lakban. “There were even flies buzzing around it all the time.”

Ms Wichut sent photos of the funky fungi to the Kusoldharm Foundation, who then passed them on to an officer at the Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary, who confirmed that it was a specimen of *Pseudocolus fusiformis*, a stinkhorn mushroom most commonly known as the ‘stinky squid’, which is rarely found in Phuket.

— Winai Sarot

3D smartphone app aims to help tourists

THAILAND’S Tourist Police launched a new smartphone application last week in hopes of improving service and convenience for tourists.

The augmented reality application, ‘Thailand Tourist Trips and Tips AR Book’, enables tourists to use their smartphones to learn about the basics of Thai culture; get tips on cultural sensitivity; and to receive information and location links to tourist destinations.

The application is a 3D cartoon model with a 360-degree view, and is available in three languages – Thai, English and Chinese.

— Chutharat Plerin

Big budget set to fix Patong’s flooding woes

A BUDGET of 420 million baht has been approved by the Public Works Department to help alleviate flooding in Patong.

“Four flood-protection methods will be put into place from 2016 through 2018,” Patong Mayor Chalermluck Kebsub told the *Gazette*.

The department is now working with municipality officials on surveying, planning and designing the new systems, which include a retaining wall man-made ponds, shortcut drains and a sluice gate.

Excavation of mountains around Patong is a main source of excess water reaching the already low-lying area.

“The excavation of mountains is like making wounds on them. When water comes down, there is no surface to absorb the water or slow it down,” Ms Chalermluck said.

— Nattha Thepbamrung

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Two of Philippines' 'most wanted' arrested in Phuket

FORMER Palawan Governor Joel T Reyes and his brother Mario Reyes were arrested in Phuket on September 19, according to a *Philippine Daily Inquirer* police source.

The source, an official of Task Force Usig, the tracker group assigned to catch big-name fugitives from the Philippines, said that the Reyes brothers had long been

wanted for the slaying of Palawan environmentalist and journalist Gerry Ortega. The task force was in close coordination with the Thai police, who are holding the brothers before deportation, the source added.

In 2012, President Aquino offered a 2-million-peso (about 1.54mn baht) reward for the arrest of the 'Big Five' including the Reyes brothers, Army Maj

Gen Jovito Palparan, Globe Asiatique developer Delfin Lee and former Dinagat Island Representative Ruben Ecleo Jr.

Four of the five high-profile fugitives have been arrested. Only Mr Ecleo remains on the run.

The arrests were confirmed by the victim's wife, Patty Ortega, who told the *Inquirer* that she had been officially in-

formed by authorities.

Ortega's daughter, Mica, said in a radio interview that the family was initially 'stunned' and would not believe the news.

Ms Mica added that they felt relief that justice could continue with the trial of the alleged masterminds.

— *The Nation/Asia News Network*

New six-month multiple-entry tourist visa



New visas will be available in November. Photo: Jeremie Schatz

IN A move to boost tourism and drive the economy, Thailand has officially announced that it will start offering six-month multiple-entry tourist visas (METV) starting November 13.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official website notes that the visas will cost 5,000 baht and will grant travellers multiple entries during a six-month stay, for up to 60 days per entry.

Santi Pawai, director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MOTS) Phuket Office, said that he can see huge benefits for Thailand with the implementation of METVs. However, he cautioned that with the new visas, security should also be tightened.

"I have yet to receive any official orders as to what action the MOTS should take," said Mr Santi.

— *Chutharat Plerin*

Roads safer because of local men

FOUR local men used money from their own pockets to help fix dangerous sections of the bypass road near the Samkong underpass construction site on September 17.

Kanin Raksaraj, Jiradet Sawatjan, Somsak Juapsri and Suthisak Srikong bought two bags of asphalt, costing 350 baht, to fix the road.

"We have seen so many accidents occur over and over again on the bypass road because of its condition. We haven't seen much action taken by the construction company or local authorities. If we don't do it, who will?" Mr Kanin asked the *Gazette*.

On August 30, a group of locals protested and submitted a formal letter of complaint to the governor about the dangerous road conditions along the construction site.



Kanin Raksaraj (right) and his friends fixed dangerous sections of the bypass road. Photo: Kanin Raksaraj

"After the protest, I have only seen a few changes. They did place more lights on the road at the construction site. However, after a few days, they disappeared. The holes also have yet to be fixed. I

can't stand seeing people getting hurt because of this," Mr Kanin said.

The four plan to continue fixing the road on Sunday when there is less traffic.

"We are happy to spend the

money if it can help save lives," Mr Kanin said.

Mr Kanin and his three friends have expressed their gratitude to the public for the positive feedback.

— *Kongleaphy Keam*

Expert says plastic bag possibly killed dolphin

A STRIPED dolphin found washed up on Nai Yang Beach on September 15 most likely died from the consumption of a plastic bag, explained marine experts.

"It was about 15 years old, 2.45 meters long and approximately 90 kilograms. It had a wound near its eye," said Patcharaporn Gaewmong, a Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) veterinarian. "The results from blood samples we took showed that it died from a blood infection."

Veterinarians have yet to determine the exact illness.

"In most cases where dolphins have these symptoms, they have usually eaten a plastic bag that they mistook as a jellyfish," Dr Patcharaporn said.

"Clear plastic bags thrown



The striped dolphin may have consumed a plastic bag thinking that it was a jellyfish.

in the sea by a human can look very similar to a jellyfish, and dolphins love eating jelly fish. The plastic bag will affect the intestines and, if they do not receive any treatment, they will die."

Dr Patcharaporn noted that plastic bags and other rubbish are often thrown into the sea by people on tour boats.

— *Winai Sarot*

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Police expect new governor to tackle alleged Surin Beach encroachment

POLICE expect Chamroen Tipayapongtada, who will be the governor of Phuket as of October 1, to strongly back their efforts to evict a number of Surin Beach clubs and businesses that are allegedly encroached on public land.

"I don't think it will take long once the new governor takes charge. He was previously a vice governor for the province and use to take a very strong stance on issues concerning public land," said Lt Col Rassada Kleungwong of the Cherng Talay Police. "I believe he will wrap this up quickly."

Mr Chamroen, however, hesitated to make any comment on the matter when speaking to the *Gazette* last week.

"I've yet to take up my position as governor in Phuket. Currently, Governor Nisit Jansomwong is in charge. I think it might not be appropriate for me to voice my



Eviction notices were posted in March. Photo: Thalang District Office

ideas about the island yet," Mr Chamroen said. "I will be taking my position there on October 1 and will then be able to answer such questions."

Nonetheless, in June last year, Mr Chamroen declared Surin Beach 'beautiful again' during an official inspection following the dismantling of illegal beach structures.

Lt Col Rassada explained that due to the size of the is-

sue, the Cherng Talay Police were in the process of setting up a committee with officers from other stations throughout the island to develop a plan to present to Phuket Police Commander Patchara Boonyasit.

Eight businesses, including some of Phuket's famous beach clubs, already have cases in court, while 31 businesses are still under investigation, Col Rassada said.

— *Nattha Thepbamrung*

Inspiring

From Page 1

...grabbing us and throwing us.

"It happened week after week. All the time I would just have to brace myself."

The rest of Mr Rider's childhood was filled with more abuse and constant attempts to flee it: sleeping in rock caves and under jetties — anywhere that he could escape to.

"The problem is that the bruises go away, but the emotional scarring lasts a lifetime, which is where the post traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] comes in. With PTSD, things from everyday life trigger those emotions from back then and puts you back in that space.

"I was on a roller coaster of life really, just going through drugs, alcohol, everything to try and suppress the feelings and the emotions, the memories and just the visuals that come into your head.

"I had created successful businesses and I had tried every way to make myself happy by making money and that didn't work," Mr Rider said.

However, the tipping point came when Mr Rider opened up to someone about his childhood and didn't get the response he needed.

"After going through many years of it, I had a breakdown and considered suicide as a final option to stop the pain and thoughts from my childhood."

Instead, Mr Rider realized that he needed to face PTSD head-on so that he could perhaps someday inspire past and present victims to speak out about it.

"I knew I was making a conscious decision to break the barriers and break the cycle I was in," Mr Rider said.

That's when Mr Rider, who had been a lifelong skateboarder and surfer, took to prone paddle boarding, spending hours in physical pain, completely alone in the ocean, as he propelled himself forward with only his hands. But swelling up with that physical pain

was the emotional pain of his childhood.

"It was pretty tough on me at the start, plus you are out in the open ocean, feeling quite vulnerable. There is no protection, no security blankets, just you and the ocean. Anything can happen and you just have to kind of go with it.

"Once I found my peace, or I thought I had, I decided to do my paddle to inspire victims. I had thought about doing things for kids before, but thought it would be hypocritical, because I hadn't found my peace."

In a media stunt to raise awareness for his organization PACA and to start real dia-

logues about child abuse and its many forms in Australia, Mr Rider took on the unassisted 800km paddling trip.

"The furthest I'd ever paddled before was 40 kilometers, and here I was about to paddle 800km alone," says Mr Rider, who broke three world records on his epic voyage.

"Once I finally got into Bondi, I realized for the first time in my life that I had found peace

and I knew who I was and that I was proud of the who I am."

Child abuse can be found everywhere in the world including Australia and Thailand, Mr Rider pointed out.

Many children in Thailand are victims of physical or sexual violence or abuse. Many of these cases are never reported, as the children are afraid of reprisal and still don't have access to the infrastructures that help them report them, Humanium, an international child sponsorship NGO, states on its website.

A 2002 study cited by United Nations Children's Fund in the 2012 report *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in East Asia and the Pacific* found that 30.3 per cent of 212 polled, grade six students reported experiencing physically violent acts from both parents. Another cited study from 2010 found



Students who are abused by their teacher can come to us or send evidence to our office.

— *Damrongtham Center Chief Prapan Kanprasang*

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child abuse victims to act

that 16.7 per cent of 1,052 Bangkok residence between 16 and 25 reported experiencing physical abuse as a child.

Many types of physical abuse go unreported, especially those associated with punishment, notes Humanium.

"In this situation, the children consider the abuse as a punishment and try to hide their pain because they feel guilty for misbehaving. For that reason, children comply with that situation, believing that it is a normal part of their life," the Humanium website states.

However, child abuse often goes beyond physical violence in the more damaging realms of mental and emotional abuse, Mr Rider explained.

Phuket children are most at risk to these types of abuses, explained Urai Maidukem, of the Phuket Shelter for Children and Families on Koh Sireh.

"Nowadays, children are left alone at home, or handed over to caretakers while their parents are at work. These children do not receive enough love or family time," Ms Urai said.

"We don't see a lot of chil-

dren in Phuket being physically abused. However, regular violent confrontations between parents can have deeply scarring affects on children – more so than direct physical violence."

Issues within families are derived from complicated situations that are not helped by social media, which often alienates children and parents from each other, Ms Urai said.

"Each family has it's own unique problems and we cannot always get to the root of it. We lend our hand and it sometimes ends with us mediating a discussion among family members. However, this doesn't always work."

In addition to welfare officials, teachers also have a role to play in combating child abuse, explained Jakgrit Siriwat, deputy director of the Department of Student Affairs, Satee Phuket School.

"Teachers are told that they must be sensitive to whether or not a student is having issues at home," Mr Jakgrit said.

At the same time, teachers must watch each other to ensure physical violence isn't being



For more about the PACA visit PACA.com.au. Photo: Isaac Simonelli

used as a form of discipline.

"Violence is prohibited in schools. A teacher caught being violent with a child will be fired," assured Chalam Attatham, the di-

rector of the Phuket Primary Educational Service Area Office.

Anyone with evidence of a teacher physically punishing or abusing a student can report it

to a councilor, the director of the school or to the police, confirmed Mr Chalam.

Those fearful of their complaints falling on deaf ears, or of retribution, can anonymously send evidence to the Damrongtham Center (Ombudsman's office).

"Students who are abused by their teacher can come to us or send evidence to our office inside Phuket Provincial Hall. We can also be contacted by phone at 076-213 203," confirmed Damrongtham Center Chief Prapan Kanprasang.

Police will also investigate any claim of child abuse made by the victim or a third party, confirmed Maj Nucharee Longkaew of Phuket City Police.

To do this, police coordinate their efforts with the Department of Social Development and Welfare in Phuket and other child protection foundations.

"I would like to urge anyone who witnesses abuse to report the issue to us. This is not just a family problem, this is a problem in society as a whole," Maj Nucharee said.



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Gov urges police to work harder on drug cases

Water pipeline 'a done deal'

The Phuket Gazette

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IN THIS ISSUE

News: Gasohol goes on sale

Water solutions on the way soon

Water problem will not be solved by a few showers

Gasohol goes on sale in Phuket

AROUND THE ISLAND: Looking some depth to Thai art.

PHUKET PEOPLE: This year's modeler.

LIFESTYLE: Clunk trip.

GOOD LIVING: Royale treat.

FIRST SOLID: September 17.

THE COMPANION: September 17.

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Deputy Interior Minister Somchai Sunthornvat: 'The days of free water are in the past.'

lion-baht proposal to pipe water to Phuket from Chiao Lan Reservoir in Surat Thani as a long-term solution to Phuket's water problem.

The mega-project is one of several schemes discussed during a supply tour of Phuket's water problem.

In the short term, the PWA has already agreed to buy water from both the Keng Nguan and Sri Suchart ponds. These have storage capacities of 2,500 cubic meters and 3,000m³ respectively, and work is already under way on two 25-million-baht pipelines to connect them to the distribution system.

The PWA is also interested in buying some 3 million cubic meters of water from the Hitlor

had originally planned to invest 600 million baht to build a plant capable of treating 12,000m³/day, but had since decided to downsize the investment to 500 million for a 9,000m³/day plant.

K. Jaturong said he expected the PWS to approve the project within a week, and that the plant should be up and running by March, with REQ selling the desalinated seawater to the PWA at

PWA is negotiating with REQ Water Services Co to build a desalination plant on a two-rai site between Central Karon Hotel and Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort to help relieve chronic water shortages in Kata-Karon and Patong.

"It is clear that Patong, Kata and Karon are far away from the main distribution system, so we shall build a reverse-osmosis treatment plant to serve those areas," DM Somchai said.

If negotiations are finalized soon, work on the plant could begin in October and be completed in about four months, after which time desalinated sea water would be treated and pumped into the PWS distribution system in the area.

REQ General Manager Jaturong Saduagkan explained that his company

had originally planned to invest 600 million baht to build a plant capable of treating 12,000m³/day, but had since decided to downsize the investment to 500 million for a 9,000m³/day plant.

K. Jaturong said he expected the PWS to approve the project within a week, and that the plant should be up and running by March, with REQ selling the desalinated seawater to the PWA at

OrBorJor workers held in forest raid

By Anongnat Sartpisut

WICHIT: Phuket City Police on September 16 raided seven Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (OrBorJor) employees caught road blocking on national park 1 high up in the Nakkerd 1 in Tambon Wichit.

Pol Lt Col Chokes Suttimart told the Gazette that four OrBorJor and a backhoe were seized in the raid.

The work crew damaged 16 rai of land widening a 1,300-meter road of unpaved road width of 20 meters through the forest, which is listed as a "Zone C" water catchment area. There has been a moratorium on building the area since rain caused extensive landslides around the island in October, 2004.

OrBorJor Vice-President Suthep Thepsakul told the Gazette that the matter was a misunderstanding. The Wichit Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorJor) had hired the OrBorJor for help to widen the paved road, which had been there for a long time.

The OrBorJor complied with the request, failed to check first with Wichit OrBorJor had approval for the work from

Airport buses no threat to traditional songtaew
Shrimp farmer and 'mule' netted in ya bah sting

Queer News

The young lad and the sea

PATONG: A 15-year-old German boy tried to drown himself at Patong Beach after his parents forbade him to see again a ladyboy he had met on Soi Bangla.

On the evening of September

While all sorts of unusual behavior takes place on Patong Beach after dark, the sight of the young German trying to end his life in this fashion was apparently enough to draw the attention of passers-by.

The gift of hindsight

THE 4-billion-baht pipe to bring water to Phuket from the Chiao Lan Reservoir in Surat Thani was a 'done deal' according to Deputy Interior Minister Somchai Sunthornvat a decade ago.

The mega-project was going to be the nail in the coffin for the island's water worries and was expected to be completed in just 18 months. However, 120 months later, we are still relying on local water reserves and even building new reservoirs on the island, such as the one in Chalong, to ensure there is enough potable water for the ever-growing number of people occupying the province.

Though the need to wet our lips scored page one in the 2005 September 24-30 issue of the *Phuket Gazette*, the big story was the need to leave the local watering holes. To explore the dangers of confusing home with

a pub, then-Managing Editor Alasdair Forbes settled down with two former heavy drinkers who had managed to turn their lives around through the discovery of Alcoholics Anonymous: "I started drinking when I was 14 or 15, growing up in a place where everyone drinks. It wasn't very social if you didn't drink in Australia - you know, 'Never trust a man who doesn't drink' sort of thing."

For Phuket, alcohol seems far too often to work as the social glue that brings any group of people together, an excuse to actually spend time together, as if such an excuse is needed. Far too often booze is being overlooked as the menace to society, from the seemingly socially accept-

able act of drunk driving to domestic abuse and depression. We have already lost far too many good people on this island to the 'demon at the bottom of

the bottle'. However, Thailand as a whole has seen a significant shift in alcohol consumption with it being ranked by the World Health Organization as the fifth booziest country in the world in 2000 and to not even making the top 50 in the 2010 survey.

In those ten years, the amount of alcohol consumed per person over the age of 15 was slashed by almost 50 per cent. Yet, it remains a serious concern on the island, especially as the province develops and expands, destroying many of the social safety nets

for locals and expats.

That's not to say wine tasting at the Green Man Pub in Rawai once a month, artful cocktails at Zimplex or even a cold beer with a few friends out on the boat is ruining Phuket - in fact sometimes it seems to make the moment. But, as reported ten years ago, it's the dependency: "In my last year of drinking, six years ago, I would wake up at six o'clock every morning and the first thing I would do was take a drink to calm my nerves. I could not hold a cup of coffee."

AA poses 12 questions to help people decide whether they are an alcoholic or not. Now, ten years later, we challenge everyone who is 'not an alcoholic' to sit down with those 12 questions and answer them honestly. What happens tomorrow or even 10 years from now is up to you.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Activist to hit Natural Fruit with counter charges

A BRITISH activist fighting a series of legal battles against a Thai pineapple company plans to file complaints with the anti-corruption agency and launch counter prosecutions 'to prevent ongoing harassment'.

Andy Hall posted on the news on Twitter on September 18 after the Appeals Court dismissed an appeal by Natural Fruit and the Attorney General in one of four cases the pineapple company filed against him.

Photographer sued over monkey selfie

A RARE crested macaque monkey who snapped a well-known, grinning selfie should be declared the photo's owner and receive damages for copyright infringement after it was used in a wildlife book, animal rights activists argued in a federal lawsuit filed on September 22.

Naruto, a six-year-old macaque who lives free in the Tangkoko Reserve on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, took the image and several others about four years ago using a camera left unattended by British photographer David Slater. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) said in the suit.

The so-called Monkey Selfies that resulted came from 'a series of purposeful and voluntary actions by Naruto, unaided by Slater,' said the complaint, filed in US District Court in San Francisco.

"Naruto has the right to own and benefit from the copyright ... in the same manner and to the same extent as any other author," the suit said.

Mr Slater told Reuters he felt "rather bemused" and persecuted by the lawsuit, which he said seemed to be a publicity stunt.

— Reuters



Police confirm clash with Vietnamese

THAI police confirmed on September 17 that one of their patrol boats clashed with Vietnamese fishing vessels.

According to the Vietnamese government, the skipper of one boat was shot in the head and killed, while two other men were wounded.

Roadside blast wounds three

THREE patrolling police were slightly wounded by a roadside bomb laid by insurgents in Pattani province on September 21. The attack happened just before 8am on a road in Tambon Sabarang in Muang district.

Police said the 10-kilogram bomb was assembled in a pipe and was detonated with a walkie-talkie.

Deadlines set to tackle fishing and trafficking

THE government has accelerated efforts to tackle illegal fishing and human-trafficking problems, with November 15 set as the deadline to meet crucial international requirements.

Additional amendments to the Fisheries Act would be enacted by mid-November so as to fully meet the international regulations on fishing as re-

quired by the European Union, said Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan on September 18. The EU earlier issued a warning to Thailand to comply with its rules or face a ban on seafood exports worth billions of baht to its 28 member countries.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha also ordered authorities to finalize the country's 2015 report on anti-human trafficking measures by November 15 in a bid to show the international community the progress Thailand has achieved in preventing and solving human-trafficking problems.

Both issues damaged the country's reputation and would hit Thai exports if countries start imposing bans.

32 transferred in trafficking crackdown

THE drive against human trafficking has brought further retribution with the authorities on September 21 slapping 32 police officers with transfer orders for their alleged roles in the trade, National Police Chief Somyot Poompanmuang said.

The transferred officials belonged to police regions 8 and 9, plus the Immigration Bureau and Central Investigation Bureau, he said.

"The transfer [of the officers] has been done under police jurisdiction in accordance with recommendations from concerned agencies," Gen Somyot said.

The move is reportedly based on the ongoing investigation led by Deputy National Police Chief Aek Angsanant, which started in earnest after authorities discovered mass graves of Rohingyas at alleged trafficking camps in southern Thailand and Malaysia earlier this year.

Public hopeful about speed limit crackdown

ARRESTS related to traffic violations are on the rise since Chiang Mai province implemented its 'slow city' speed limit policy on March 1. And local people remain hopeful that their roads will become safer if the policy continues long term.

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Push for PACA

THE efforts of Australian paddle boarder Damien Rider to raise awareness of child abuse, which is an important, yet seldom-discussed topic, deserves the support of everyone on Phuket.

At first glance, an 800-kilometer solo paddle board expedition through some of the planet's most notoriously shark-infested waters in Australia might seem an impractical and dangerous way to try and raise awareness of child abuse issues back on terra firma. But a closer look into Mr Rider's difficult life journey as a victim of extreme forms of childhood abuse reveals a personal triumph.

Those traumatized by direct and indirect violence at school or at home deserve all the support society can give them. By setting up the 'Paddle Against Child Abuse' (PACA) foundation to raise awareness of these issues and provide direct assistance to young child abuse victims, Mr Rider is taking the next step – and apparently healing himself in the process.

'Child abuse' is a very broad term, one that encompasses a wide range of negative behaviors from neglect to actual physical and mental harm. The key to preventing child abuse lies in maintaining strong family units that provide children with a sense of comfort and positive support.

'Social media', perhaps inappropriately named given how unsocial it makes people, is a growing concern when it comes to abuse, as pointed out by Urai Maidukem of the Phuket Shelter for Children and Families on Koh Sireh. Too often children and parents are plugged into their phones, forgetting to take the basic steps to develop those close bonds necessary for a strong family unit to be created. However, it is a double-edged sword, which can also be used by victims as a comfortable way to cry out for help.

Here in Phuket, we can still witness child abuse all around us every day. Most often it comes in the form of sheer neglect.

Despite the gravity of the problem, talk about child abuse issues seem to arise only following incidents that are reported in the media, such as when an irate teacher metes out excessive corporal punishment to a disobedient student.

For the most part, however, cases of child abuse remain hidden behind closed doors, and even when they are not, most of us tend to look the other way even when the child is staring us in the face.

If the PACA can raise awareness of some of the issues involved and actually set up a center to help child abuse victims, it would be a step – or paddle – in the right direction.



Where's the protocol for Entrovirus 71?

Re: Phuket on alert for Entrovirus 71, September 15

In the organized world, any outbreak of the veterinary version of Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) gets the local authorities scrambling – precise protocols are applied to isolate the infected animals and so on. The human form of HFMD is never heard of.

Here in South East Asia, entire kindergartens and primary schools continue to operate – zero protocols are in place to arrest the outbreak – occasionally some local Public Health department makes attempts to stop the spread.

Just watch the number of toddlers and small children sitting on top of the dining tables at fast food outlets and food stalls.

*R Jackson
Sydney*

Death of a beautiful animal and island

Re: Plastic bag possibly killed dolphin, says Phuket expert, September 17

Koh Phang Ngan full moon parties, tourists on tour boats, the general public on the beach, all could have contributed to the death of this poor dolphin. I was recently on a fishing boat near the Chalong Pier in Phuket and was absolutely disgusted with the amount of rubbish floating in the waterways of Phuket. So very sad to see the death of this beautiful animal which could easily have been prevented.

*Lee-Ann Hargreave
Facebook*

Letters to the Editor

*Do you have an opinion to voice?
Email Editor@PhuketGazette.net*

Soi dogs a nuisance

Re: Nai Harn soi dogs under control, says mayor, September 14

The dogs at Nai Harn are most definitely NOT all friendly, especially those that congregate in front of the temple and in the public car park. They are especially aggressive towards other dogs. To suggest that the public should not take their dogs to the beach because of these feral pests is ridiculous. Dogs should have collars with name tags and contact details of their carers, otherwise they are just a nuisance.

*CaptainJack
Gazette forum*

Underpaid staff are the ones who lose

Re: Kiwis off the hook after paying 'dine and dash' tab, September 16

Poorly paid restaurant staff are often held responsible for unpaid bills – and they're the ones that ultimately lose out. The negotiated settlement sets a bad example for others to take the risk and follow. The pair should have at least been deported and banned from re-entering Thailand.

*Agogohome
Gazette forum*

Someone influential needs to step up

Re: Video Report: Shores awash with injured sea turtles, September 18

Yes, people need to stop throwing their rubbish into the sea. My observations are that a vast amount of trash is generated by the fishermen themselves, from huge chunks of white foam that quickly break up, to bundles of fishing line, nets, ropes and brown bottles. When, oh when, is somebody with huge influence over people going to start a 'Keep Thailand Beautiful' campaign? It's desperately needed.

*Chob
Gazette forum*

Diesel fuel should be compulsory

Re: Freshly fueled boat bursts into flames at marina, two seriously injured, September 14

The Marine Department of Thailand should make it compulsory that all transport boats, particularly those with passengers on board, be fitted with diesel engines, as is done in many countries around the world.

When we see speedboats going to Phi Phi, Phang Nga and Similan with more than 50 passengers and fuel tanks with more than 2,000 liters of benzine, we may have to be scared about boarding those death traps, which may kill and burn dozens of passengers within seconds.

*Seafarer Divers Charlie Phuket
Facebook*

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A fond farewell to Phuket

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR

I AM impressed with Phuket for many reasons.

First of all, all the projects that are taking place on the island would not be possible for me to handle on my own. It comes with a great deal of co-operation from local sectors.

Additionally, Phuket has a very strong local community network. They strictly monitor officials' work and effectively voice their opinion, reflecting the problems in the province, such as the protest that took place at the Samkong underpass construction site.

They take their civic duty seriously and take good steps to improve political development.

On my official Facebook fan page that is open for Phuket's people, there are a lot of useful comments, complaints and suggestions on subjects concerning my work. It connects residents and officials and encourages them to work together. It makes the process quicker.

On the other hand, Phuket is a very challenging place to govern.

I have had to substantially improve myself in many ways. Every day, new problems or issues come up, all different and unpredictable.

The associations and clubs, such as the Phuket Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Industry Union, have given me moral support and have advised me many times when dealing with difficult situations.

And lastly, the media here is very supportive and is always offering suggestions and bring up topics to help make my work as efficient as possible. We



Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong will soon take up a similar post in Nonthaburi to tackle new projects and challenges. After serving one year, the governor, originally from Ratchaburi, stepped in with the aim to develop and make much needed

changes in Phuket and its future.

Here he reflects on his time as governor and the work that he is most proud of.

share information with one another to best understand what's best for the island.

As for the work I have done, I have always said that I have tried to govern the province with four main principles in mind – to upgrade standards, encourage tourism, preserve the natural environment and implement sustainable management systems.

As we can now see, the traffic problem is being solved with the underpass projects that have received a budget of more than 1 billion baht. Projects like this will help develop the province in the next two years.

However, there is no development that will be convenient for everyone 100 per cent of the time. People will definitely face traffic jams, but please be patient.

Apart from the big budget for the traffic infrastructure, there are projects that I have started that I am very proud of.

Phuket received a 180-million-baht budget to finish the Klong Kata Dam in Chalong and connect with the Provincial Waterworks Authority's water supply center. After this is complete, the water supply system in Phuket will flow much

more efficiently.

The construction of the Chalong Hospital also received a budget of 105 million baht. I have already set up a committee to work on the project and this will take about 2 years to complete.

Meanwhile, the flood protection system in Patong recently received 420 million baht, while a separate budget of 550 million baht was approved for the Muang District flood protection system.

Aside from infrastructure, I was also able to obtain a 29-million-baht budget to purchase more than 200 CCTV cameras and 150 million baht from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports' project, 'Phuket, Peaceful City', to install and maintain the cameras.

I am also proud of implementing the Grab Taxi system in Phuket, as well as approving 87 new tuk-tuks to work legally, while pushing 50-baht public van transportation between Patong and Phuket.

Although almost every project will be completed in a few years, I am proud that I have laid their foundation and created a great standard for Phuket's future.



One of the many craters found on Phuket. Photo: Thanapoj Kitboonma

Free road accidents

YEAR on year, the population of Phuket grows along with the island's traffic problems. In my 12-year experience on Phuket, I would say that traffic is now worse than ever.

It's no wonder that the governor decided to spend money in order to reduce traffic by building underpasses in certain areas.

However, the thing that concerns me the most is the condition of the roads near the construction sites.

There are not enough warning signs or lights to help drivers safely maneuver the road at night, causing many people to have accidents.

The Samkong intersection underpass that was originally slated to be finished in March has seen delays causing it to push back its completion date until the end of the year.

Delays in construction are acceptable, but along the road in that area you'll face very extreme conditions, like tracking on the surface of the moon with an added accident for free.

During construction, particularly in the last 6 months, I have read accident reports online from that area every day. Most often it involves a motorbike hitting a big pothole at night because of the inadequate lighting or warning signs.

Last week four local men bought their own asphalt and

Island View

By Pruth Kulprasit

Do you have an opinion to voice?
Email Editor@PhuketGazette.net

started patching up the road.

At first, they were only able to fix two holes, but after people saw their good deed on Facebook, more people joined them and now many areas of the road have been mended.

Their work has already made the road so much safer and is better than the whole lot of nothing that was done before.

It was only after their story had spread that the government jumped in and ordered the Highways Department to act.

I know that the government had this in their view and that these issues take time to fix, but why did we have to wait so long and let so many accidents occur before action was taken and why did the community have to demonstrate what action needed to be done for the problem to finally be solved?

As underpass construction continues in different areas of Phuket, I can only hope they will do a better job at maintaining the construction area.

Inconvenience is one thing, but people getting injured and losing their life or the life of a loved one is unacceptable.

Words from the Wise

"The internet is just a world passing around notes in a classroom."

– Jon Stewart

"You must learn day by day, year by year to broaden your horizon. The more things you love, the more you are interested in, the more you enjoy, the more you are indignant about, the more you have left when anything happens."

– Ethel Barrymore

Issues & Answers

Are there road curfews for large trucks and buses?

THERE are several road construction areas in Phuket at the moment that cause bad traffic.

There isn't even a rush hour anymore as we have to deal with traffic jams all the time except late night.

I often see a lot of big buses and trucks on Thepkasattri Road and am wondering whether or not they are only supposed to be on the road during specific hours.

Jessica Parker
Thalang

Lt Col Sarawut Meeboon, chief of Thalang Traffic Police replies:

Thank you for your ques-

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

tion. Please note that time constraints on big vehicles are only applied in the Phuket City Municipality area. That means buses and trucks are allowed to run on Thepkasattri Road anytime at all.

However, big vehicles, such as buses and trucks or other low-speed vehicles like motorbikes, must be driven in the left lane unless obstructions prohibit this.

If someone is caught breaking traffic rules then they will be fined 400 to 1,000 baht.

Focus on China when investing



Finance

By Don Freeman

CHINA'S stock market is imploding and that's not only shaking confidence in the country, it's also impacting global financial markets. However, investors need to keep in mind that over the past 15 years, the Chinese stock market has actually experienced both sharp rises and steep falls with the last crash occurring in 2007.

The market then largely moved sideways until about a year ago when the government and state controlled media began talking it up as they began pro-market reforms. Since there are few productive places for Chinese savers to put their money to work beyond the property market (which the government has also tried to cool), many new and inexperienced retail investors entered the stock market.

The problems started at the beginning of this year when economic growth slowed dramatically and the effort to reform financial markets turned into an effort to create a wealth effect to prop up faltering economic growth.

There were actually several catalysts that finally burst the Chinese stock market bubble and these included MSCI not including China in their emerging market indices (meaning no big



Currently, it's difficult for investors to quantify any direct damage or exposure. Photo: Alan Cleaver

influx of foreign institutional investing), the easing of monetary policy (but no fresh money entering the stock market), and heavy margin financing that caused small margin calls to lead to increasingly larger share price falls. There were also expectations that the government would never allow the stock market to fall since it had talked up the markets.

Most foreign investors and funds own shares or have exposure to Chinese stocks trading on foreign exchanges, or the Hong Kong Stock Exchange but not the sinking Shanghai Stock Exchange, which the government is attempting to prop up as local investors are taking heavy losses.

As draconian policy interven-

tions aimed at shoring up share prices have largely failed or only had a short-lived effect, the widely held belief that China's government and policy makers are in complete control of the economy (and can achieve whatever outcomes they desire) has been badly shaken. In other words, there are still limits to autocratic command and control economies.

China's government is also still dominated by autocratic political leaders schooled in Maoism who are neither economists nor technocrats – meaning they can't necessarily grasp the free market policy concepts needed to run a modern economy. This makes

badly needed long-term structural reforms difficult to consider or implement.

The stock market crash can still spill over into the general Chinese economy to impact multinational companies with big operations there, but many companies do not break out their sales and profits for the country – making it difficult for investors to quantify any direct damage or exposure.

Aside from Chinese stocks and China ETFs, consumer stocks with heavy exposure to China like Yum! Brand Incorporated (NYSE: YUM), casino stocks with Macau operations like Las Vegas Sands Corporation (NYSE: LVS) and

commodities (e.g. copper prices have neared six year lows) could continue to see bigger headwinds.

However, not all stocks with exposure to China will be impacted the same way e.g. Boeing Co (NYSE: BA) has long term (as much as 20 year contracts) to sell aircraft or spare parts to China, but shares of Caterpillar (NYSE: CAT), which sells both mining and construction equipment that's also used in big infrastructure projects that the Chinese love to undertake, have recently hit a 52 week low.

The bottom line is that the Chinese economy is second in size to the US and is still very dynamic and growing – meaning foreign investors cannot ignore the direct and indirect investment opportunities there. Moreover, any investor with a well-diversified portfolio should see a limited fallout from any Chinese stock market crash.

Don Freeman, BSME is president of Freeman Capital Management, a Registered Investment Advisor with the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), based in Phuket. He has over 15 years' experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. Don can be reached at 089-970-5795 or email: freemancapital@gmail.com.

Baht inches up, FED keeps rate

THE US Federal Reserve's decision this week to maintain its policy interest rate at between zero and 0.25 per cent weakened the US Dollar Index by around 1 per cent and contributed to the strengthening of other currencies when compared with the greenback.

However, uncertainty with the timing of the increased federal funds rate remains and the capital outflow from emerging markets is expected to continue, said the Bank of Thailand.

The baht appreciated by 0.51 per cent from its opening value of 35.762 per US dollar to 35.577, but there was no significant change in the Stock Exchange of Thailand, whose main index had risen by just 3.04 points to 1392.47 on a market value of 16.207 billion baht.

Currencies in India, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea strengthened by 0.88, 0.58, 0.49, 0.36 and 0.27 per cent respectively.

– *The Nation*

Closures jump 17 per cent in first 8 months

THE number of business closures increased considerably in the first eight months as a result of lower crop and fuel prices and the strict regulating of the lottery industry, said the Business Development Department.

The department reported that the number of business closures rose 17 per cent year on year to 9,984 compared with 8,563 during the same period in 2014.

Pongpun Gearaviriyapun, director-general of the department, said that while the increase in closures was quite high, it was not a surprise because firms selling lottery tickets accounted for most of the shutdowns.

Last month, the number of closures increased 25 per cent from August 2014 to 1,542. Most were lottery companies, followed by construction, property-development, and retailing companies.

The department reported that the number of new companies



Closures rose to 9,984 year on year. Photo: Nicholas Eckhart

increased by 4 per cent year on year during the first eight months to 41,857 firms, indicating that the business sector remains confident that the economy will continue to recover.

In August, the number of new companies was down 6 per cent year on year to 4,912 and down 9 per cent from July.

The upcoming full implementation of the Asean Economic Community, the establishment of special economic zones and the government's re-

cently launched economic stimulus packages should encourage more investment in the long term, Ms Pongpun said.

Her agency projects that this year will see between 60,000 and 65,000 newly registered companies.

The total value of companies' initial-investment capital in August was down 35 per cent year on year to 13.24 billion baht.

There are 617,851 registered businesses operating in the Kingdom. – *The Nation*

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Waking the Sleeping Dragon

Social media, KOLs necessary to access wealthy Chinese market

By Nattha Thepbamrung

KEY Opinion Leaders (KOL) and Chinese-based social media applications are the key to unlocking high-end Free Independent Travellers (FIT) for Phuket, experts told a packed room at the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) Phuket chapter seminar on September 18.

The in-bound Chinese market for Thailand is booming with more arrivals between January and June this year than all of 2014, putting the country on pace for more than 12 million arrivals.

Though the Chinese market is often painted with a single brush – zero baht package tours – key speaker at the event, David Johnson of Delivering Asia Communications (DAC), estimates 7-10 per cent of these arrivals are FIT.

A fresh wave of FIT travellers is splashing across Thailand, explained Vanessa Zhu, DAC's digital marketing specialist and communications director for China.

"There is an increasing number of FIT travellers from China because Thailand has become famous among Chinese travellers for more than ten years. The first wave of travellers who

came to Thailand now already understand and like the country, so they are willing to do a deeper trip," Ms Zhu said.

To market themselves to these clients, Phuket businesses need a completely new set of tools, explained Ms Zhu.

"It is a great opportunity to let Thai people know how the media really works in China. Because of the 'great wall', the Chinese firewall - censors almost everything, people do not know what really works and what doesn't," Ms Zhu said.

"A lot, or probably all, of the social media that we are using here does not work in China. Therefore, they [tourism industries outside of China] have to realize that there is a parallel universe existing in China. They have to share information with different tools."

There are clear equivalents for mainstream products such as Facebook inside China: Weibo (Twitter), Baidu (Google) and DaoDao (TripAdvisor). However, the big pusher is WeChat, which comprises the functions of Facebook, LINE, Instagram, Twitter, PayPal, Skype, Pinterest and more.

"Outbound Chinese travellers are more likely to consider a product they see referred to in social media. They are in



It is time to tap into the Sleeping Dragon's wealthy, FIT market ? Photo: Official GDC

general skeptical of information from news sources and advertising," states the *Hurun Report*.

This makes it essential for companies wanting to access the high-end FIT Chinese market to understand how to use the 'new' social media platforms effectively.

"Chinese people right now are really eager to go travelling outbound. The important thing

is to let them know where to go, what to play and how to access knowledge about the destinations," Ms Zhu added.

One of the many ways suggested during the seminar was to dial in on KOLs, such as famous Chinese bloggers or other Chinese celebrities, encouraging them to visit a destination and push product on their followers.

Also highlighted as essential

moves for those wanting to successfully tap into the market were having Chinese speaking staff, menus and itineraries; setup WeChat accounts to allow more convenient interactions with guests; develop specific itineraries for the market; conduct press trips to get Chinese social media buzzing with your brand; and encourage Chinese guests to indulge in posting selfies online.

Value in organic search results



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

WHILE I believe that, because of Social Media (Optimization), Search Engine Optimization (SEO) itself is becoming less relevant, there is no doubt it is still important in getting organic search results, especially with Google and YouTube, by far the leading search engines.

While the algorithm for being ranked is constantly changed by Google, and like the recipe for Coca Cola is one of the world's best kept secrets, it is possible to analyze trends and predict certain components of the 'Quality Score' used to rank sites.

A couple of clear trends are emerging.

The intelligent approach to building websites and making them user-friendly seems to correspond directly to the results. Such as having a website that is "responsive", which sim-

ply means no matter what device you view it on, it adopts that format. This includes mobile devices, iPads and so on.

The content is also unsurprisingly key. The reliance on keywords has become less pronounced and a more holistic view has been taken. So more relevant content, with easier readability and more quality and detail is being rewarded. Providing the actual information that searchers are looking for, is now the most important element, rather than trying to pad an article, or load it with keywords.

Finally, while Google denies it, there is a strong correlation between popularity in social media platforms and the Google results.

Simon Wetherell is a Social Media Expert, Lawyer, Best Selling Author & International Speaker. For more information go to PhuketOnlineMarketing.com or call him on 095 085 3355.



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Police commanders visit island

Phuket Panwa Beachfront Resort was highly honored to welcome the commanders of the Royal Thai Police before they attended the opening ceremony of the new Region 8 Headquarters at Mai Khao recently.



Denis Martin, Phuket Panwa Beachfront Resort's GM (4th from left), in the company of the commanders of the Royal Thai Police, led by Commissioner General Pol Gen Somyot Poompanmoung (4th from right), at the resort's lobby recently.

Dental company wins Prime Minister's Award



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha hands over the award to Dr Pornsak Tantapakul, CEO of Dental Corporation Co Ltd. (right).

Among those whom Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha honored by giving the prestigious Prime Minister's Export Award 2015 was Dental Corporation Co Ltd which was cited as Best Service Export Provider in the area of medical tourism. The ceremony took place at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center on September 17.

This is the second time Dental Corporation has won this award. Patients at both its Dental Signature clinic in Patong, Phuket, and Bangkok International Dental Center are mainly from the English-speaking community within the country as well as overseas patients.

Maroon 5 swing by the new Laguna Phuket Golf Club

The newly-renovated Laguna Phuket Golf Club received some special guests this month. The music world's luminaries, Adam Levine and his US chart topping pop band, Maroon 5, dropped by during the current Asia and Australia leg of their world tour.



Adam Levine (middle) and the rest of Maroon 5 band enjoying two rounds of golf at Laguna Phuket Golf Club

Twinpalms' anniversary party

Twinpalms Phuket threw a big party to mark its 11th anniversary on September 19. This fun event was held at the Palm Seafood Lounge, Bar & Restaurant and attended by over 1,000 guests.



Having fun are Sittichai Jitnatham, Twinpalms' hotel manager (2nd from right) and Somjai Tungkoo, the hotel's executive manager (2nd from left).



Olivier Gibaud, Twinpalms' GM (1st right), welcomes some guests.



Guests having a whale of a time.



DJ Romain Pelletti and his performers at the party.

Events in Paradise

Japanese festival packs them in

Large crowds of people thronged Jungceylon in Patong during the recent Japan Culture Pop Festival 2015, which was jointly held by the Japan-Phuket Association and the popular shopping center.

There was plenty of Japanese food and snack booths, as well as workshops for making bento rice balls and carp fish flags. Many students also participated in the cosplay competition to try to win a scholarship.



Naruemon Sookeu, who is dressed up as Ursula the Little Mermaid cartoon (right), receives an award from Naresh Chanthalakana, Jungceylon's M&E manager, after coming 1st in the single cosplay category.



Vijitra Keawwilaisak, robed as Kirsaki Chitoge from the Nisekoi cartoon (left), receives an award from Hirakawa Takashi, vice president of Japan-Phuket Association, after coming 2nd in the single cosplay category and winning the popular vote.



Suthathip Keawsamlee is attired as Shimakaze from the Kantai Collection cartoon.



Girls from Tokyo's fashion and shopping district, Harajuku.



Girls wearing Love Live cosplay costumes.



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Local cycling team brings home gold



Team Fourteen Photo: Terapon Somkiatikul

THE Phuket-based cycling group Team Fourteen won the 40km Team Time Trial held in Surat Thani on Sunday.

Daniel Amby, Greg Dick, Sunny Teerasak and Jonathan Fowler completed the course in a time of 54min 40sec with an average speed of 44.23km/h. A total of 29 teams from all over Thailand competed in this unique event sponsored by Cafe de Bike.

The Team Time Trial is unique in that all four riders must work together to finish in the best possible time. Winners are determined by the lowest accrued time on the course.

"It was a great event," said Team Fourteen captain Daniel Amby. "The course was good for us and we rode together well. Thanks to Cycle Boutique, Kask, Rotorpower, Revv Energy and Thanyapura for sponsoring us."

— *Phuket Gazette*

Island lunatics ready for Super Moon Super Blues

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

THE super moon on Monday night is expected to draw out blues, jazz and rock lunatics for a night of music, drinks and soul food at Bliss Beach Club.

The Super Blues Event will run from 7pm to midnight, with Black & Blue, Pjae Stanley, K PJ and Bobby Blues all gracing the stage for the Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB) gala evening 'Fun-Raiser'.

"It's a super moon super blues event as this is the single day of the year that the moon is largest and closest to the planet. The finest blues artists in Southeast Asia charitably getting together to put on some great shows," Otho Beale 'OB' Wetzel III told the *Phuket Gazette*.

"We call it a fun-raiser because by having a great time eating superb food and drink while listening to great music – all the while we are helping needy local children get much-needed food, school supplies, polio vaccinations or whatever."

Chef Garfield of Bliss and an expected four other Phuket



Be a lunatic and join the Supermoon event. Photo: Arches National Park

chefs will be conjuring up their best renditions of United States soul food, while sneaking in some proper southern dishes and even a little Cajun love.

"We play some blues, most of it up-beat. There will be soul, such as Ray Charles and Etta James, rock and reggae, from Steely Dan to Bob Marley to the Rolling Stones to BB King," Peter Jenson of Black & Blue said.

Funds raised through ticket sales, 2,000 baht if purchased in advance and 2,500 baht at the door, will be used by RCoPB for the benefit of local children, assured Mr Wetzel.

"The charity funds being raised are helping to support schools and kids who may otherwise have been forgotten by government funding. These are ad-hoc schools at work camps or orphanages," Mr Wetzel said.

"RCoPB ferrets out what those special needs are and always responds with foodstuff or necessary goods or clean water or medicine. The whole effort is feel-good for Rotarians and those charitable souls who help out."

As with all RCoPB charities, every baht goes directly to those in need, there are no administrative or handling fees.

Also to raise money, there will be a number of high-end items up for auction during the event: there is an original Ray Charles vinyl, a tennis ball signed by Roger Federer and a two-day trip to the wine country of Australia – room, board and Ferrari provided. Even Black & Blue is going up for auction, allowing those who love the show to bring the entire band to their own home for three sets at a private party.

So be a lunatic, grab your credit card, cash and check-book for an extraordinary night of dancing, drinking and eating at Bliss Beach Club – and if you can't have a fun-filled night for yourself, do it for the children.

Trapani's Bohemien workshops not flash in pan

SOCIAL media was flooded with stunning and mesmerizing images following the wrap up of the Bohemian photography workshop at the Banyan Tree in Phuket earlier this month.

Big name co-host and Sony ambassador for the Philippines, Manny Librodo, helped draw a large crowd of participants and added a new dimension to the workshop, explained Adriano Trapani, who developed the unique



Mr Librodo's style seen in Wayne Edginton's photo (left) is dramatically different from Mr Trapani's (right) concept and atmosphere of the Bohemian workshops. "I like this style of work-



sual arts by elevating the standards."

Sitting by the gurgling pool waiting for one of three models to come out of the dressing room, Manny couldn't help but agree.

"I like the dynamics, it's something different from the usual workshops I have where people are concerned with taking a certain number of shots and so forth," Manny said.

— *Isaac Stone Simonelli*

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

September 28. Super Moon Super Blues

Black & Blue will be wailing into the night as they host a Super Blues Event at Bliss Beach Club during the Super Moon Monday night, from 7pm to midnight.

This will be the musical event of the

year for Phuket with notable guest artists such as Pjae Stanley, K PJ and Bobby Blues on stage.

The food too will be a fabulous showcase of several chefs, who will put out their finest soul food dishes to help Chef Garfield of Bliss.

The gala evening is a 'Fun-Raiser' for Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB) with proceeds going to the club's charity fund, which supports a number of projects for children.

Prepaid tickets are 2,000 baht, while tickets at the door are 2,500 baht.

Tickets are available at the Gazette office, Bliss Beach Club and through the RCoPB.

There will be auctions, raffles and door prizes. Join us for a great night and a great cause

October 23. Chulalongkorn Memorial Day

Chulalongkorn Day commemorates the reign of Rama V, who is best remembered for introducing many progressive reforms and for the abolition of slavery in Thailand.

October 30. Phuket Tourism 'By The Numbers' at AMCHAM Event

The American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) Greater Phuket Chapter will present a tourism event led by STR Global's Area Director for Asia/Pacific Jesper Palmqvist, at Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort.

STR is the leading global performance indicator for hotels and will showcase the past, present and future outlook for the island.

Registration begins at 4:30pm. The session runs from 5pm to 6pm.

Nok Air plans big push in Phuket



By Stephen Fein

PINYOT Pibulsongkram, a Nok Air Vice President, told Up in the Air recently that Nok currently has five daily flights between Bangkok and Phuket with six flights on Fridays and Sundays. Nok plans to increase these services for the upcoming high season.

Operating out of Don Mueang Airport in Bangkok, Nok offers flights to Phuket from the capital aboard its fleet of 189-seat Boeing 737-800s.

Load factor on the Phuket flights has been consistently



Nok Air plans on increasing daily flights between Bangkok and Phuket. Photo: Alec Wilson

strong at about 90 per cent, even in the aftermath of the Erawan Shrine bombing, Mr Pinyot said.

“Usually after an event like that one would expect to see an immediate drop in bookings, but that was not the case. We were all really surprised by it, to be quite honest.

“We expected a slight seasonal dip in September followed

by increasing demand in October and into the high season.”

Nok plans to increase the number flights to Phuket even further after the current airport expansion project is complete and deems six or seven flights daily as ‘manageable’ after the work is complete.

Seasonal demand for flights to Phuket have changed a great deal over the past five years and

the island is now much more of a year-round destination. Nok uses a variety of advertising campaigns to remind its main client base, Thais living in metropolitan Bangkok, that it does not rain continuously in Phuket during the monsoon season.

Load factors on the Bangkok-Phuket route have consistently been among Nok’s highest in recent years.

“In the mechanics of low-cost carriers, we do not typically push promotions on flight routes that are doing well. But the downside of this is that we have not directed much promotion effort to foreigners.

“Our passengers to Phuket are about 95 per cent Thai, but in a market like Phuket where as much as 80 per cent of passengers in transit are foreigners, we need to do a better job capturing that market,” Mr Pinyot said.

Nationwide, Nok Air and Thai AirAsia are neck-and-neck in terms of market share, each with about one-third of the domestic market. The final third is divided among other carriers including Lion Air, Bangkok Airways and Thai Smile.

“But it varies from city to city. For Phuket, AirAsia has greater market share because they offer more flights,” he said.

Aircraft center on AOT agenda

AN AIRCRAFT maintenance center may be built at the Chiang Rai International Airport in the North to cope with the growth in air travel and tourism in South-east Asia and China, the Airports of Thailand (AOT) said.

Nitinai Sirismatthakarn, president of AOT, said last week that the company was studying the feasibility of building an aircraft heavy-maintenance center at Mae Fah Luang Chiang Rai International Airport to handle the significant growth in the aviation and tourism industries in the North and the region as a whole.

“Chiang Rai airport has high potential. If the project happens, AOT should take benefit from many airlines operating in the southern part of China, as well as in Southeast Asia and Thailand,” Mr Nitinai said.

AOT is the operator of six international airports in Thailand.

Singapore is benefiting from the bulk of the business from aircraft heavy-maintenance and after-sales services. Many airlines from southern China are using Singapore for such services, he added.

Once the feasibility study is completed, AOT will invite key aviation players to join the in-



The new aircraft center will be at Chiang Rai International Airport. Photo: Jutipan Mongkolsuthree

vestment and development.

Aside from the impending projects at Mae Fah Luang and Don Mueang airports, AOT is also planning to build a third runway and second passenger terminal at Suvarnabhumi Airport in the next five years.

Phuket International Airport is also expected to complete renovations by 2017, while Chiang Mai and Hat Yai airports have plans for renovations in 2020 and 2023, respectively.

“A budget of 142 billion baht is set for developments at six airports over the next 10 years” Mr Nitinai said.

By 2019, the number of annual passengers at the six airports is expected to increase from 81 million to 165 million.

— The Nation



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Getting a foreign divorce in Thailand

By Robert Virasin
and Yutthachai Sangsirirap

RECENTLY our firm was hired to handle a divorce case. This case was different from the typical family law divorce. The Thai couple met in the United States while attending college. They fell in love and got married in the United States. They completed their university degrees, lived in the United States for a few years, and then returned to Thailand.

After returning to Thailand, the couple began to grow apart. They separated and decided to terminate their marriage. The husband came to my office and asked a series of questions that I believe are pertinent to many couples in similar circumstances. There are many foreign couples, Thai couples, and mixed marriages where the couple was married overseas then decided to get divorced in Thailand.

Here are some common questions:

Q) We were legally married in the United States but we never registered our marriage in Thailand. Do we need to get a divorce since we now live in Thailand?

A) Thailand and the United States do not have a specific treaty on marriages but gen-

erally recognize marriages and divorces in both countries as long as the marriage relationship does not violate general prohibitions within each country. For example, a same sex marriage in the United States is not recognized in Thailand.

If a couple was legally married in the United States and does not violate Thai law or moral code, the marriage is recognized in Thailand. However in order to obtain certain spousal benefits, Thai nationals need to register their marriage.

Married couples who are now separated should obtain a divorce because there is the liability of something occurring in the future. They cannot get remarried since both Thailand and the United States do not allow bigamy or polygamy. The second marriage can be legally voided and the first spouse can claim a portion of the assets if the initial marriage has not been properly terminated.

Q) What do we need to do to get divorced in Thailand?

A) There are two options to obtaining a divorce in Thailand. Couples can register their foreign marriage at the local district office. For marriages that have been registered at the



When it's time to go your separate ways, how do you manage the divorce? Photo: Katherine McAdoo

local amphur and the parties agree to the divorce, the couple can go to the same amphur to register the termination of the marriage.

However for most courts in the United States to recognize a foreign divorce, it is important to ensure due process. This means that the court must have jurisdiction over the parties and proper notice must be provided. This is generally completed through an agreed divorce filed through the Thai court system where the parties submit to the jurisdiction of the court and allow a judge to issue a formal judgment.

Q) If my spouse does not cooperate with the filing of the divorce in Thailand, can we still proceed with the filing of the divorce?

A) It is possible to file a divorce for a foreign marriage in Thailand as long as all parties are provided proper notice and the court has jurisdiction over the parties. However, the process can be costly and take much longer to complete. There is also the possibility of the court not accepting the case because of the complexity of ruling over a divorce of a for-

eign marriage.

The dissolution of a foreign marriage is a complex undertaking. It is highly recommended that before starting the process, the parties seek counsel of a licensed Thai attorney who understands the requirements.

Yutthachai Sangsirirap is a licensed Thai attorney who handles family and criminal litigation at Virasin and Partners. Robert R. Virasin is a licensed US attorney and managing director of Virasin & Partners. They can be reached at info@virasin.com or at www.virasin.com.

Brands need to embrace the omni-channel trend

IT IS difficult to argue that our shopping behavior has changed during the course of the past decade. Newer ways of shopping via electronic and mobile commerce are now playing larger roles in our lives.

In the process of this change, bricks-and-mortar stores faced stiff competition from these online and mobile players. To survive the ordeal, many of these physical stores crossed over to the digitalverse by expanding their presence to online.

However, as time passes, modern consumers are adapting along with the omni-channel trend, with physical and e-stores playing parts in shopping behavior.

This omni-channel retailing is becoming such an important



E-commerce is still evolving.
Photo: Daniel Broche

movement that new players are entering the digital commerce space, including Facebook, which foresaw this rapid change in purchasing behaviour.

E-commerce has been around in Thailand for quite some time and has hit an all-time high.

It is looking prosperous to the point that the Ministry of Commerce has forecast that the total

value of the segment in Thailand will reach 1 trillion baht by next year. The main contributing factors for this forecast are the soaring penetration of smart devices and the entry of new e-commerce players domestically and internationally.

However, e-commerce is still evolving at the global level because of the aforementioned omni-channel trend. Omni-channel retailing is all about the necessity of merging e-stores and physical stores together, creating one seamless shopping experience.

Simply put, the omni-channel trend boils down to consumers being allowed to purchase at a whim as long as it's comfortable for them.

— The Nation

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Try your best at Laguna Tri-Fest

THIS year's Challenge Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest (CLPTF) will once again see world champions compete for a slice of the race's 25,000 euro prize purse.

Following the success of its inaugural event in 2013 and the second edition last year, the iconic multi-sport week-long event is set to take place again, with the 22nd Laguna Phuket Triathlon (LPT) on November 22 and culminating with the 3rd Challenge Laguna Phuket (CLP) a week later on November 29.

The unique appeal of the Laguna Phuket Triathlon (LPT), comprising a 1.8km swim, 55km bike, and 12km run, and the half distance challenges of Challenge Laguna Phuket, featuring a 1.9km swim, 90km bike, and 21km run, are attracting entries from leading international professional athletes, as well as age groupers worldwide.

With the event only two



World champion athletes will soon be flocking to Laguna for this year's Challenge Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest.

months away, the excitement is growing by the day. To date, more than 1,300 athletes have signed up with an estimated 1,500 athletes expected to join.

In the Laguna Phuket Triathlon race, 2014 champions Massimo Cigana and Alberto Casadei from Italy

have registered to return to defend their title, impressively crossing the finish line together to become LPT's first dual champions.

LPT will also see the return of Australia's Luke McKenzie who has won at Ironman Cairns in June. McKenzie is a frequent competitor at La-

guna Phuket's triathlon races. Last year, he came in third in the CLP.

This year, McKenzie will be joined by his American partner Beth Gerdes who began racing professionally in 2012 and took a hiatus in 2014 to give birth to their daughter, Wynne.

A week after LPT, the

Challenge Laguna Phuket race will see both its champions from the men's and women's fields, Swiss Olympian Ruedi Wild and world champion Melissa Hauschildt of Australia, defending their titles from last year's race.

Wild made his LPT debut in 2012 with a title win that he successfully defended in the 2013 race before his first CLP title win last year. In August this year, he came in third at the Ironman 70.3 European Championship in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Hauschildt is CLP's two-time champion in the women's field. She will try and race this year to get her triple win in a field that will include Olympian Radka Vodickova of the Czech Republic.

For more information and race registration, please visit www.challengelagunaphuket.com

By Gazette editors

Triathlon training tips

WITH barely two months to go before the Laguna Phuket Triathlon, these next 8 weeks are vital to help you prepare for the race ahead, but it's also a perfect time to challenge yourself.

Here are some top tips compiled by Thanyapura's Head Triathlon Coach Sergio Borges.

HEAT AND HUMIDITY

About three to four weeks out from the race, go to a steam room two to three times per week and just sit there for 10 to 15 mins. By doing that you're making your body more efficient in dealing with heat and humidity so that when you get to Phuket, you will feel a bit better.

THE SWIM

My best advice is to swim more before the race. Most athletes overlook the swim training as they think it's just a small part of the race but the truth is that the swim is the foundation of the triathlon. The fitter you are swimming, the better you will feel on the bike, and on the run.

PROPER EQUIPMENT

The next challenge you will

encounter are the hills. There are a few very steep hills (up to 22 per cent gradient) on the course and I often see athletes pushing their bikes up the hill due to used, improper gear. If you are a strong cyclist and are used to climbing hills, I still recommend the use of a 39 (small chain ring on the front) and a 28 (cassette on the back wheel). If you are a beginner you should be using what we call 'Compact Cranks' that have smaller chain rings on the front (36 or even 34 teeth), making it easier to spin up the hills.

RUNNING IN THE HEAT

As I mentioned previously, the weather will be challenging so pay attention to hydration, especially during the cycling part. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids on the bike (one to two bottles per hour), preferably electrolyte drinks. When you get to the run, control your pace and do not start too fast, take your time at the aid stations to cool yourself off and get in enough fluids. I also advise athletes to consume calories during the bike and run as you need to replace glycogen when exercising over 90 mins. I recommend between 200-250Kcals/hour for women and 300-350Kcals/hour for men, through sports drink, gels or bars.

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War of hotels raging on island



Property Watch

By Bill Barnett

THERE is a war going on in Phuket. It's not being fought on the street, or across the beaches, but in glittering hotel properties across the island. Both sides are squarely facing off against each other trying to woo guests and conquer higher levels of occupancy and premium room rates. In this instance the war is one between branded versus independent hotels.

Tracking performance of hospitality assets here over the past decade, the market has experienced a series of volatile events ranging from the Asian tsunami, global financial crisis, 2013 coup, political crisis and the latest being the Bangkok bombing. While the destination has been remarkable in recovery as has been demonstrated by the numbers time and again, there are both winners and losers in the hotel market.

On a broad pallet, our research has shown that branded hotels outperform non-branded offerings in a downturn. Of course generalizations are never wise in a business view, but the reality is that when rates soften to spur a return to normal, consumers tend to be sheep and flock to the known brands versus the unknown. I



Beautiful Phuket is seeing the battle between independent hotels and chains heat up. Photo: Reibai

can hear the brand men licking their lips in anticipation as I type this.

That said, Phuket has a number of star war superstars who have bucked the trend, broken away from the flock and are often admired, yet hated, by the brand set. Twinpalms comes to mind with their unique offering of design, food and beverage culture and events. Sri Panwa at the top end, where Wan Issara and crew continue to attract chic travelers, while over the bridge Aleenta has set a magical stage for beachfront getaways. Or

Gordon Oldham's Pavilions in Layan who proved that off-beach can still equate to high rates, as does the Indigo Pearl in Nai Yang.

Certainly I could go on with other anecdotal offerings but there is the flipside, or more appropriately, the downside of the argument. Once you get into the mass offerings of upscale, midscale, and budget and economy offering, the trend starts to fall off the rails. At the forefront of the argument remains the distribution debate that chains can provide wider

booking systems and access to a global marketplace. Yet the counter argument to this is that the island has increasingly seen a growing dependence on wholesale tours and online travel agencies, such as Agoda, Expedia, etc. in the leisure market, versus chain-generated business.

Taking the brand issue a step further would be to mention those hotel group loyalty programs by Hilton, Hyatt, IHG and ACCOR as a starting point, but the main benefactors that drive these brands are good

corporate or urban settings, and at the end of the day, resorts are mainly used by loyalty cardholders who earn points on business trips and redeem them on vacations.

Still travelers have to make a decision on what hotel to stay in and in this case it is recognition that draws them in. Yes, TripAdvisor has brought an entirely new dynamic to the exercise of booking and certainly authentic boutique properties are growing in preference, and yet the larger world brand still carries incredible weight in our daily lives, from consumer electronics, smartphones and fashion, to even our morning coffee.

When I look at Phuket by the numbers, I see financially adept developers gravitating towards chains and, as such, the physical component of the offering is often more complete, as is location. Lending institutions for larger hotels tend to favor the use of brands, which is often a strong motivator for owners.

To close this out, as Phuket moves towards a decided case of hotel oversupply, the battle between independents and chains is likely to become more magnified, and those who move into the winners circle need more than just a uniform sign and global affiliation they will need in addition, excellent design, concept, and delivery elements.

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Myanmar slashing real estate prices

EXORBITANT property prices, highlighted as one of the biggest business barriers in Myanmar, are expected to be brought down to a level competitive with that of neighboring countries by 2018.

Moe Thida, deputy director of the Construction Ministry's Urban and Housing Development Department, told the Myanmar Global Investment Forum last week that some measures have been launched and more will be coming to bring down the prices.

As more office space is in focus, more land would be allocated to private construction projects.

"If the supply of commercial space increases, prices will fall. We are now observing how much land to be allocated for office and commercial development and how much for residential development," she said.

According to Colliers In-



Demand out of control in Yangon.
Photo: Theis Kofod Hjorth

ternational Myanmar, the total office stock in Yangon – the biggest commercial city – was 107,000 square meters at the end of last year. It predicts annual average new supply of 70,000 sqm from 2015 to 2018. Citywide, office rents rose 6 per cent from 2013 to US\$69.17 (2,500 baht) per square meter per month, but buildings in the inner city zones enjoyed a 23-per-cent increase.

At that rate, it is more than

\$S11.93 (300 baht) per square foot – the average monthly gross rent for premium office space in the Raffles Place/New Downtown micro-market in Singapore.

Moe Thida attributed the high land prices to high demand as well as speculation. While demand is out of control, the government is reining in speculation through tax measures.

"The government needs to monitor land use purposes. We are trying to satisfy demand," she said.

Another focus is also placed on low-cost residential construction. Myanmar plans to provide 30,000 such units in three years.

Moe Thida noted that 58 per cent of households in Myanmar earn less than 300,000 kyat (8,300 baht) a month.

- The Nation/
Myanmar Eleven

Andara bags four awards

FURTHER entrenching the Andara brand on the island is the sweeping of four awards for the developer's latest entry in Kamala, Andara Signature Resort and Villas, at the Thailand Property Awards 2015 last week.

Building up on the huge success of the 26 Andara Villas and 37 Andara Residences, the new phase was named Best Villa Development (Phuket); Best Villa Development (Thailand); Best Residential Architectural Design; and Best Landscape Architectural Design at the real estate event organized by Ensign Media.

There were winners and highly commended projects for a total of 29 categories over three sections: developer, development, and design. The top winners in Thailand will move on to compete with their ASEAN peers in the grand finale, the South East Asia Property Awards 2015, which will take place at The Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore on October 21.

"I am truly honored that the design of Andara Signature Resort and Villas is appreciated by the real estate industry and it is the first major recognition that the project has received since the first phase of the development was completed this year," said Allan Zeman, chairman of the Lan



One of the four awards handed over to Andara was 'Best Villa Development (Thailand)'.

Kwai Fong Group, under whose fold is developer Andamandara Development.

"I came up with the idea of bringing a high-end resort experience to Phuket after building my own dream holiday home here. I love the people, nature and culture here. I believe that Andara will continue to set trends and bring a relaxing lifestyle to travellers all over the world," said Natthakanya Saengpho, CEO of Paradise Group, whose design team cre-

ated the award-winning motif.

"Andara Signature Resort and Villas has been launched to meet the ever-increasing demand from clients looking to invest in high-end resort-managed property on the island of Phuket."

Lan Kwai Fong Group is involved in diverse sectors in Hong Kong as well as major cities in mainland China and throughout Asia. The core of the business involves property acquisition, development, op-

erations and management for commercial, leisure and entertainment use.

The group's ventures in Hong Kong and mainland China include Lan Kwai Fong Chengdu that opened in 2010; California Tower unveiled in 2014; Mission Hills Lan Kwai Fong Haikou on Hainan island; Lan Kwai Fong Wuxi in Taihu New City, and the group's latest project, Shanghai DreamCenter.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Red Roof to expand into Thailand

RED Roof, a United States economy lodging group, is partnering with Thailand-based Paragon Hotels to open properties in the Kingdom with confidence that the tourism industry will thrive in the years to come.

A series of newly-built hotels is planned to open across Thailand between 2017-2020 in all major tourist locations.

With over 400 properties in the United States, Red Roof targets domestic travellers looking for cost-effective lodging solutions. It is banking on the study that over 148 million domestic travel-related trips are forecast for Thailand travellers in 2015.

Targeting both leisure and business domestic travellers, as well as international travellers, Paragon Hotels hopes to eventually build Red Roofs hotels in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Bangladesh and other countries, expanding Red Roof's presence.

"With the first series of locations strategically selected by Paragon Hotels expected to roll out throughout Thailand, Red Roof will have immediate brand density and exposure across the country," noted Phil Hugh, the chief development officer for Red Roof.

– *The Nation*

TCC Land Group earmarks B60bn for 2016

TCC Land Group, a property arm of Chang Beer tycoon Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi's empire, has set aside an investment budget of more than 60 billion baht for next year's business by listed and non-listed companies in the group.

"After having restructured our property group, separating it into three businesses – hotels, retail and offices – this year, via three property funds worth 80bn baht in total, we have

started to expand this year's investment to 15bn baht to renovate existing projects, with the rest of the investment budget to be spent from 2016 to 2019," TCC Land chief executive officer Sommapat Trisorat said last week.

TCC Land is the non-listed property arm of TCC Land Group, which holds 100-per-cent stakes in

TCC'S PROPERTY INVESTMENT PLAN

TCC Group, which is a business of beverage tycoon Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, has set aside a capital expenditure budget of more than Bt60 billion next year for both listed and non-listed property firms.



Source: TCC Land Group, Golden Land Property Development Plc

NATION GRAPHICS

its two subsidiaries: TCC Land Asset World Leisure, which develops and manages hotels, and TCC Land Asset World Estate, which develops and manages the group's retail business.

Meanwhile, Univentures is the group's listed property unit, which holds major stakes in two property companies: Golden Land Property Development, which is also listed on the stock market, and non-listed Grand

Unity Development.

Currently, TCC Land Group earns 40 per cent of its revenue from its hotels, 30 per cent from office buildings, and 30 per cent from its retail properties. The group's revenue averages 10bn baht a year.

– *The Nation*

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